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An Anthropological Perspective on the Japanese Tea Ceremony

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Nowadays, many Japanese practice the tea ceremony (Jap. *Chanoyu;* also designated simply as Tea) according to various agendas. Because Tea avails itself of traditional Japanese architecture, gardening, dress, and food, some seek in Tea their national and cultural identity, especially vis-à-vis the West. Because of the Taoist/Buddhist background of Tea, some practice it as a form of Zen meditation. There are also some who bring to Tea their antiquarian interests in collecting Tea utensils and in studying their use in Tea. They tend to go to tea ceremonies for the esthetic pleasures they provide. Whatever their agenda, the modern Japanese practice Tea as an important social event from which they draw a sense of national and real or desired socio-economic belonging.

In the past, however, the Japanese used Tea for different purposes. In times of war, say during the Warring States period (1467-1572), when the *daimyo* fought among each other for military/political supremacy, Tea was used to create consensus and peace; in times of peace, say after the reunification of the nation in 1591 and the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunal government in 1603, however, it was used to affirm the new socio-political order. In each period, it seems, Tea was used to fulfill some immediate, that is, local and contemporary needs. Adapting itself constantly to new social, political and consequently cultural situations, Tea is a dynamic system much like ancient ritual, myth included. Looking at the transformations Tea underwent in the course of history, from its introduction to Japan at the end of the twelfth century until today, we realize that Tea is a ritual which, like other ritual, relates to reality in a multi-dimensional symbolic way. In order to understand Tea as ritual, which is the aim of this paper, we must refer to recent scholarship to point out the areas in which Tea relates particularly well to ritual.

Given the strict rules of conduct to which Tea subjects hosts and guests, Tea seems to correspond to the rules of conduct in the presence of the sacred that

Emile Durkheim discovered in ritual. To define what Durkheim meant by "sacred" would go beyond the limits of this paper. Suffice it to say that Tea uses a sacred space where sacred symbols are on display. Tea, however, does not call any deity into presence and is not performed to please any deities other than perhaps the great Tea master Sen Rikyu (1521-1591), whose tragic death ordered by the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) made him in the eyes of subsequent Tea masters the unquestioned tutelary deity of Tea. The worship of Rikyu is not innate to Tea, but rather an exception or, according to some, an aberration. The "sacred" in Tea is not a separate entity but rather the entire *communitas* assembled in the sacred space of the tearoom. Therefore, the guests must undergo purification--usually by washing their hands and rinsing their mouths at the washing basins along the *roji* path that leads up to the teahut--to be able to enter into the sacred ground and participate in the sacred activity of Tea. It is the participants who constitute the sacred. To explain the conspicuous absence of deities in the tearoom, one must refer to Buddhism, on the basis of which Tea developed. Buddhism sees the sacred as not outside but inside the human.

Arnold van Gennep asserted that rituals have social, political and legal dimensions. This understanding of ritual is particularly fertile in Tea, as we know how much political leaders of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries used Tea as a ritual of peace and consensus, as well as of social ordering. What allowed Tea to assume such functions is that it contains, like many other rituals, a system of symbolic relations with the outside world.(1) Victor Turner maintained that ritual symbolized a larger cultural context by multivocal symbols that allow the individual periodically to readapt to the basic conditions and axiomatic values of human social life.(2) For him, ritual is a kind of normative system. Clifford Geertz also understood ritual as such a system "... which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence..." According to Geertz, the symbols of ritual create a common understanding of reality; ritual is a means to overcome the anxiety that life is meaningless and absurd.(3) It associates reality with a cosmic order by means of symbols. Ritual makes life meaningful as it links up with a cosmic order and as it extends that order into reality.

One has merely to read some of the major works on Tea written during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) to realize that awareness of Tea as a politically and socially beneficial ritual began early in Japanese history. Such Tokugawa period (1600-1868) *daimyo* as Kobori Enshu (1579-1647), Katagiri Sekishu (1605-1673), Matsudaira Fumai (1751-1818), and Ii Naosuke (1815-1860) saw

Tea as forming the necessary behavior to become an ideal ruler and citizen. People looked upon it as an ideal way of human communication and, through the arts, of cultivating the human mind. The way Geertz interprets ritual is therefore particularly relevant to Tea, as Tea is a ritual/symbolic form of human interaction based on a macrocosmic, ideal order of things, reimposed onto reality.

2

Esthetics is an essential feature of all rituals. Like ritual, the ritual arts such as dance and song were understood as a gift of the gods and to repeat this "gift" was to reactivate the divine in ritual. Many cultures take it as a fact that their ritual arts had *in illo tempore* been taught to mankind by the deities themselves not only as a divine and esthetic means of expression but as the only way men can communicate or commune with the gods. The Japanese imperial myths as recorded in the *Kojiki* of 712 and the *Nihon Shoki* of 720 make it unmistakably clear that the ritual arts have been means of communication between man and god. Japanese pictorial arts and literature, dance and song started as ritual and were only gradually secularized, that is, like Tea, turned into expressions of men to men, or man to men.

Since all rituals had and still have a social dimension, ritual esthetics aims at emotionally uniting diverse people under uniform cultural norms, that is, creating unity and harmony within diversity. Ritual achieved this goal by creating a common culture that all members of a community shared. Ritual required universal emotional participation in a common culture. This definition of ritual arts seems to befit Tea so well that it is difficult to consider Tea as anything else but a ritual. The reason why Tea was accepted as an "art" is precisely because it is ritual action confined to sacred, ritual space.

Tea utensils are works of art that owe their 'beauty" to the fact that they mediate between man and the sacred. Eric Gans has pointed out that, as a supplement to ritual, a work of art is inseparable from sacrality.(4) Unlike ritual objects discarded as taboo after use in ritual, these utensils could be used over and over again, hence their desirability to anyone with a vested interest in ritual. Tea utensils draw their economic value from their nature as ritual implements without which the ritual cannot be carried out.

Another theory equally important for Tea is René Girard's understanding of ritual as a means to create order over the lurking dangers of violence and chaos. This would trace the birth of ritual to a reaction to something dangerous and negative, that is, ritual assumes the role of avoiding violence by creating an

order in which humans can live peacefully, an order that would subject violence to ritual controls and limits. Were it not for ritual's regulative effect, potentially disruptive and chaotic behavior might otherwise get the upper hand in society.(5) Girard's theory is relevant to the Tea we know to have developed in the disruptive Warring States period in order to avoid violence and to create consensus.

One of the very basic *raisons d'être* of ritual was limiting and controlling violence. As a ritual, even early war was structured in such a way as to limit (but not to abolish) violence. Until the advent of "total war," war was subject to ritual rules (*e.g.* gentlemen's war), aimed at containing violence. When in Africa and Papua New Guinea, hostile tribes meet once a year to engage each other in a war game in which they take turns at killing one victim, they engage in fact in a ritual, limited war. Conversely, Tea was a ritual of total peace. Teahuts and rooms became the antipodes of war and violence. They were known to be the only places where members of the leading samurai class left their swords outside. Instruments of violence had no place in a ritual setting of social and political harmony. Battlefields and tearooms were strict opposites, symbolizing respectively war and peace. As far as we know, no one has ever been assassinated in a tearoom; by participating in Tea, warriors expressed their desire for consensus and non-violence.

Norman J. Girardot echoes Girard in his understanding of ritual, especially Taoist ritual, as a means of transforming temporarily or permanently some significant ill in the cosmological or existential order. For him, ritual presents a salvation from potential chaos (1983:6) and the cosmos is the cultivated persona of chaos (1983:5).(6) Ritual tries to overcome chaos and to convey a perception of order. This also applies to Tea which expresses this order in the notions of harmony, respect, purity and tranquillity (*wa kei sei jaku*) that all Tea practitioners are constantly reminded of in the calligraphy displayed in the tearooms and in Tea instructions.

Japanese Tea takes place in a space that is structurally separate from the ordinary, everyday space of human activity and, therefore, seems to correspond to the liminal space Victor Turner discovered in many rituals. As Turner pointed out, ritual often takes place in an area which is not central but peripheral to the community. He called this area "liminal," which means "marginal." Tea was and still is practiced, geographically and structurally, in areas liminal to the centers of human society. Liminality is in many cultures, including the tearoom, a mystical meeting place of the human and divine worlds. Liminal space allows one to separate from one's normal, everyday "milieu," a separation which is

preliminary to reflecting upon and restoring the human order. Myths, symbols, philosophical works, and art have been essentially products of liminality. As liminal spaces, tearooms are discursive, that is, miniature, symbolic loci of human equality or ideal social structure. What happens in these spaces provides man with models on the basis of which he is able to take distance from and measure his own society.

There are various ways in which Japanese architects and gardeners separated sacred space from ordinary space. Some of the famous Japanese pavilions such as the Golden (built in 1397), Silver (built in 1483), and Hiun (Floating Cloud, built in the years 1586-87)--all in Kyoto--can be accessed only by proceeding across a pond or river, however narrow and shallow, or across stepping stones. These are symbolic demarcation points and lines between the ordinary and the divine worlds. Tea gardens usually come with a path called *roji*, referring to the Buddhist parable of escaping from the burning house which is the world, and a middle gate beyond which one is supposed to leave the mundane world behind. This separation is not only physical but also ontological because this space is so structured as to provide the impression (or the illusion) of entering an extraordinary space filled with symbols. The symbolic use of this space and the way in which the Tea ritualists direct these symbols back to the ordinary world remind us strongly of the properties of rituals in many cultures.

3

Tea and Victor Turner's liminality have much more in common. In Tea, as in ritual, people try to establish a symbolic *communitas* in which the "I" and "Thou" are able to merge, where the "Thou" becomes the "I" and vice-versa. The distance between self and other, which upholds life in normal times, disappears in favor of unity. "I" and "Thou" become "we," a "we" established and strengthened by ritual *communitas*. Tea is sacred activity precisely because it creates this kind of *communitas*. On the other hand, it can also separate and create hierarchy between the "I" and "Thou."(7) As Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out, ritual has the power of differentiating between those who perform the ritual and the people who do not or those who are kept outside its perimeters.(8)

Particularly relevant to Tea is the fact that ritual involves learning by the body rather than by intellect. It prefers to use non-verbal forms of communicating values rather than verbal ones, and when verbal forms are used, they take on the highly ordered forms of song/poetry and rhythmic recitation. Ritual is basically action--dance and mimicry, singing; it can be substituted or

represented by language (*e.g.*, myths and other forms of story-telling and recitation), but its "grammar" is different from that of ordinary language.

In order better to understand Japanese ritual and ritual behavior, let us juxtapose ritual and ordinary behavior, as it appears in Tea, in the following graph:

	RITUAL BEHAVIOR	ORDINARY BEHAVIOR
Food	rice	lower crops
Drink	*sake*, tea	water
Space	liminal, restricted	ordinary, human space
Behavior	ceremonial, dance	non-structured
Speech	song, poetry, recitative	ordinary
Viewing	contemplative	ordinary

What distinguishes ritual from ordinary behavior is art. Artistic behavior is what defines Tea. Through such highly ordered artistic forms of behavior, Tea seeks to order humans and society.

Functioning in ritual, the artist is a powerful ritual manipulator, powerful because he can change procedures to favor and legitimize one or another power faction. He can deliberately change ritual procedures, perhaps like the shaman who, through oracles he claims to be spontaneous and legitimate, potentially destabilizes the state. Hence the need to control ritual, to place it under political authority. Since ritual can order humans, it is important that the ritual means to do so be entrusted not to random behavior but to professional or semi-professional ritual experts, like the *doboshu* of the Ashikaga shoguns and, later, the grand Tea masters. This is already evident in earlier periods of Japanese civilization. For example, in the Heian period (794-1185), when government positions gradually became the hereditary rights of separate families, government officials kept diaries to instruct their descendants in ritual-political precedence. Ritual is an art heavily dependent on precedence and this is certainly true for Tea and the functions of the grand Tea masters (*iemoto*). Change in ritual procedures and protocol was only possible in crisis, or when radically changed conditions required new ritual procedures

The practice of Tea and the *iemoto* system went hand in glove. Beginning roughly at the end of the eighteenth century, the grand masters became Tea promoters and guardian-leaders, imbued with the authority of defining not only what Tea is, but also what the rules of its pursuit should be and how they should be observed. *Iemoto* authority is an outgrowth of ritual. As we have learned above, since ritual was able to restore the world, ritual procedures assumed an importance that could not have been entrusted to non-professionals, especially not in a developed state. To fall out of harmony in the music and dances performed each new year at the Chinese court could have been interpreted by political rivals as heaven's sign that the state and heaven are no longer in harmony, that a rebellion is called for. Hence the attempts of states like China and Japan to regulate the ritual arts so that no unskilled person could breach the procedures and disrupt the harmony. Hence also the attempts to subject the ritual arts to strict rules and regulations and to impose on them rigorous training and critical supervision. The perfection the ritual arts reached in Japan in, say, poetry or the Noh theater, or in Tea, resulted from the concerns accompanying all ritual performance on which state welfare is believed to depend.

4

State sponsorship of professionals or semi-professionals in the ritual arts is an early form of the *iemoto* system. During the Heian period, for example, the heads of the imperial bureau of poetry (*waka-dokoro*) and that of music saw to it that high standards would be met and maintained, especially at important ceremonial occasions. The poetry that went into the twenty-one imperial collections (*chokusenshu*) between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries was carefully selected as to its suitability and representation of seasonal changes and human sentiments. Inauspicious poetry was excluded as a threat to the state. The decline of the court in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries resulted in a heightened level of criticism and ritual professionalism, as if to say that the state depends on the artistic perfection of ritual. Only a handful of poets were believed to be able to uphold the highest standards. Prominent families of poets allied themselves with political power factions, exposing themselves to political fate. Supported by land holdings bestowed on them in perpetuity, these official or semi-official poets allied themselves with political power groups and court factions and monopolized the compilation of imperial collections of poetry. By doing so, however, they willingly exposed themselves to the leaders' politico-ritual needs. The heads of these schools became the first *iemoto*. There were *iemoto* before but, as in the case of traditional families of imperial cooking or kickball, they did not appeal to a larger public and accepted no disciples other

than from among family members. Some schools of poetry, however, taught poetry to family outsiders while at the same time maintaining a degree of control and leadership over teacher-disciple relationship and poetic diction that was beneficial to the state. What differs from the modern *iemoto* system is that the disciples, once given a license, could teach without referring back to the head schools and without paying them portions of student fees. Teacher-disciple relations formed the backbone of this system, which fed on the feudal lord-vassal relationship system instituted at the end of the twelfth century. Even outside the *iemoto* system, the teacher-student relationship tended to be regulated under a system called *kokin denju*, that is, imparting the student with some poetic secrets with no regard of how this teaching would be transmitted in the future. In the Middle Ages (*chusei*, 1185-1600) with a very limited number of disciples, this system was sufficient to secure transmission of certain traditions at a sufficiently satisfactory level. This is why early Tea masters such as Sen Rikyu adopted this system.

Let us now discuss what Tea owes to specific East Asian ritual and ritual cosmology, because only after having done this can we better understand the specific uses of Tea as a socio-political ritual in sixteenth-century Japan.

On the basis of Taoism, the ancient Chinese established entire systems of classification and cosmology. They divided the universe into Five Elements (wood, fire, water, metal, earth) and in turn subjected them to the yin-yang system of attributing to all perceivable phenomena a male-female taxonomy, similar perhaps to the masculine, feminine and, in certain cases, neutral articles of Indo-European languages. Yang is male, active, light, hot. Yin, on the other hand, is female, passive, dark and cold. This taxonomy was used for divination, but also constituted the principles of government, court ceremonies, military science, medicine and pharmacology, and the arts. Major events in human life have been interpreted on the basis of this system. It became a system of reference helping people to understand their universe, their lives, and the events that happened to them. In the *Book of Changes* (*I-ching*, attributed to Confucius, 551-479 BCE), yin and yang emerged from the primordial chaos. Yang ascended to heaven, whereas yin descended to become earth. In and by themselves, neither of these two elements could engender anything; they could create only if they came together. It is out of their union that the many things in the world have come into being. When they come together, not only do they create many things, such as earth, mountain, water, wind, thunder, fire, marsh, and heaven, but they subject the things they created to constant change, the permutations of which undergo certain measurable patterns and are therefore predictable. These patterns are subject to ritual manipulation.

The Five Elements are not fixed and isolated elements in the Taoist universe. They constantly interact in a dynamic relationship of transformation:

Water engenders wood.
Wood engenders fire.
Fire engenders earth.
Earth engenders metal.
Metal engenders water.
Yet, each element overpowers the other:
Water overcomes fire.
Fire overcomes metal.
Metal overcomes wood.
Wood overcomes earth.
Earth overcomes water.(9)
There is no element that does not overcome another in an eternal rotatory transformation. Of course, these five elements are not the only ones subject to transformation; the entire universe hangs on them. This philosophy is basic to the emphasis the Chinese have always placed on balance rather than on extremes.

5

The Japanese tearoom is structured strictly according to the forces of yin and yang and the Five Elements; certain portions of the room are either yin or yang and the utensils and people occupying such space are identified with these elements. The way in which the host prepares Tea accords with the Five Elements. Charcoal "wood" is used to build a "fire" which is used to boil "water" in an iron kettle "metal" which, in turn, is used to make Tea in a bowl "earth." "Earth" is furthermore represented in the ashes surrounding the burning charcoal and, in some forms of Tea, in the brazier. The teascoop and ladle also represent "wood" and, because Tea is made in harmony with all these elements, it becomes the essence of the universe.

Tea ritual draws as much from Buddhism as from Taoism. Buddhism is the earliest of the world's great soteriological religions, preceding Christianity by half and Islam by a full millennium. Born as a north-Indian royal prince, the Buddha (meaning the "Enlightened One," a title given him by his disciples) had taught that self-discipline leads to enlightenment, the prerequisite for escaping life which was, for him, in any of its numerous forms, a living hell. Drawing from the Brahman notion of reincarnation (or rebirth), the Buddhist ideal is to escape from life and, through enlightenment, to be reborn in *nirvana*, never to be reincarnated anymore. According to Zen teachings, imitating the life-style of

the Buddha was the best guarantee for enlightenment. All living things carry in themselves the seeds for enlightenment but, in the absence of a universally applicable teaching, each individual must find his own path towards enlightenment. This central Buddhist notion is often represented in paintings representing the two seventh-century Chinese monks Han-shan (Jap. Kanzan) and Shih-te (Jap. Shitoku), both enlightened, one by sweeping the floor, the other by studying. Any activity can potentially lead toward enlightenment.

Tea seeks social harmony not merely through esthetic contemplation, but through self-discipline and personal discovery. It combines ritual's social agenda with a personal desire for salvation. Whereas Tea requires a degree of contemplation of, and concentration on, beautiful ritual action, it also invites the participant to look into himself or herself, to discover a self that is no longer separate and potentially antagonistic but in harmony with the environment and all others.

Whereas the tearoom is structured according to Taoist principles, it also bears the traces of Buddhism, especially in the choice of size. Before we discuss the Buddhist small room, we must contrast it, because the small room was indeed meant to be a contrast, with the large reception rooms called *shoin* (study). The Ashikaga shoguns (ruling between 1336 and 1572) used large reception rooms for their banquets. Especially in this setting, the shoguns displayed Chinese utensils and paintings as an expression of power and social status. With its ranked seating arrangements, *shoin* Tea became an expression of social differences and hierarchical order. The *shoin* will maintain this function in the centuries to come but it will have to compete with another ritual setting, more originally Buddhist, that of human equality in the "small room."

From the time of fifth Ashikaga shogun Yoshimasa onward, the much smaller four-and-a-half mat room came to be used. Yoshimasa's Dojinsai, a four-and-a-half mat small room located in a building of the Silver Pavilion called Togu-do (Seeking Way Hall) is, by contrast, a humble statement of human equality before the Buddhas. Perhaps it was the Buddhist legend of Vimalakirti's ten-foot-by-ten-foot room where he invited 84000 bodhisattvas (*Vimalakirti-nirdesa-sutra*) which prompted the building of small rooms. For Vimalakirti the small room contained infinite space. The small room symbolizes the non-existence of space for the enlightened. It is a world unto itself, where continuity of ordinary space and time, dependent on our physical existence, ceases to exist. Within such a room, one is a disembodied spirit, unencumbered by material limitations. In such a room, there is no absolute time, only the ever changing

"now." This is similar to the paradoxical Zen *koan* (parable) of a mighty mountain in a poppy seed.

Freedom through restriction is one of the Zen principles applied to both Tea space and training. Freedom is sought not in large space or in unrestricted behavior but, on the contrary, by accepting and "overcoming" restrictions. There is freedom through meditation and other forms of self-discipline. For a person trained in Zen, a small, cramped room like a four-and-a-half mat room can be overcome to represent infinite space and freedom. This new type of teahut or room represented a kind of ritual anti-structure to the large *shoin*-style reception rooms of the shoguns.

Murata Juko (1423-1502), one of Rikyu's predecessors, was the first merchant Tea master to build a small teahut with a four-and-a-half mat room in the city of Kyoto, thereby creating a liminal space structurally and geographically differentiated from regular city dwelling and merchant shops. Despite its central location, his hut remained essentially "liminal." Juko was hearkening back to the Chinese "saint" of Tea Lu Yu (?-804, author of the *Cha Jing*, the first extant Chinese comprehensive book on Tea) who practiced Tea in a separate environment especially fashioned for Tea and the enjoyment of other noble arts. His motive for building a teahut in the middle of the city was, to offer a ritual explanation, as a way to juxtapose, with minimal distance separating the two, the symbolic ritual world with reality. He was in fact bringing liminality close to the center of society. The "mountain hut" of Takeno Jo'o (1502-1555), Rikyu's teacher, and Rikyu's "Yamazato" (Mountain Village) were also small rooms.

Smaller size tearooms also coincide with the advent and popularity of the *wabi* esthetic which marked a turn back to the Buddhist essence of frugality, simplicity, even poverty and ultimately to human equality vis-à-vis the Buddhas. *Wabi* was in sharp contrast with the *shoin* setting. Hence the custom to use only natural elements such as bamboo, reed, and clay in building these simple *wabi* tearooms. The *tokonoma* (alcove) posts were installed with the bark still on, to give the tearoom a rustic look. This also coincided with the simplification of display. Aiming at social harmony, Tea developed the *wabi* esthetics of minimal beauty. *Wabi* Tea seeks harmony by creating equality; conversely, *shoin* ritually confirms the existing social order. It is clear that *wabi* Tea, with its emphasis on non-differentiation, appears more spiritual than *shoin* Tea. Let us now elaborate more on the meaning of *wabi* and the arts it engendered.

Often called the esthetic of poverty, *wabi* developed a predilection for crude, unglazed, irregularly shaped, even cracked or repaired utensils and mountain hut-type hermitages in which only fragile, natural objects were used, often leaving posts and ceilings in their natural state. With the use of such natural, unpretentious utensils, this new environment was more congenial to promoting equality than the ornate, elaborate Tea of the shoguns who used only precious Chinese utensils.

Wabi creates a simple, unpretentious beauty, with which all participants can identify. It is not the ostentatious, opulent beauty of the wealthy and powerful or those who identify or comply with it. It is, like the stone garden of the Ryoan-ji temple in Kyoto, a reduction of phenomenal variety to some fundamental, simple elements, such as stones and sand, suggestive of the basic unity and simplicity that underlie all things and which we all share, wherever we may be or whatever position in society we may occupy.

What is more, *wabi* invites humility, that is, a negation of self in the absorption in something else as expressed in the Buddhist notion of *muichibutsu*. This concept can mean many things. It points to the Buddhist notion of "nothingness," "emptiness," or the original unity of all things. In Rikyu's time, *muichibutsu* referred to *wabi* people who did not possess nor covet one single utensil. *Muichibutsu* people were supposed to be free from any attachments and passion for possession.

Responding to ritual needs, *wabi* tended to become a locus of esthetic contemplation. Yet the esthetic objects were different from those of *shoin*. They were the *wabi*-style *wamono*, Japanese-made simple, unpretentious objects. *Wabi* and *wamono* went hand in hand, hence the understanding, still maintained today by Tea devotees, that *wabi* is Japanese cultural heritage at its best.

As we have seen above, during times of peace, say before 1467 and after 1591, military and political leaders tended to use the Tea ritual as a reaffirmation of social and political order. While recognizing the unchanged ritual properties of the tearooms and their space, they achieved this by seating their guests (allies) according to the dominant hierarchy the ritual was meant, symbolically, to perpetuate. In times of war, however, when Tea particularly flourished, leaders/ritualists sought strict human equality in the tearooms. By inviting potential enemies to Tea, they tried to create harmony and consensus by breaking down social difference and by promoting equality and intimacy between host and guests.

This relates well to Evan M. Zuesse's theory that rituals can be divided into "confirmatory" and "transformatory." Whereas *wabi* Tea was transformatory, *shoin* and *daimyo* teas were confirmatory because their aim was no longer to "establish" human equality, but to "confirm" the established social order.(10) Because it opposed mainstream social structure, transformatory Tea could not assume that function without being at the same time an anti-structural and counter-ideological "transgression." Throughout most Tea history, both systems coexisted in ways conformable with the emphasis certain people or groups placed on either equal consensus or hierarchical confirmation. Under such religious leaders as priest Sojun and Tea devotees such as Murata Juko, Takeno Jo'o, and Sen Rikyu, *wabi* Tea, with its soteriological purpose, functioned as a transformatory Tea, that is, aiming at changing humans, making all equal. Yet, such Tea could also function as a confirmatory one, once the transformation has been achieved and the transformatory has developed into a set ritual culture in its own right. If Tea ritual aims at overcoming violence by creating peace and consensus, it maintains a degree of transformatory function.

The Tea ritual also assumes a confirmatory function when members of a certain social class practice it in ways so as to affirm class belonging and allegiance. However, the Tea ritual can assume both functions at the same time, especially when it functions to initiate the individual into his social group or helps a political leader to legitimize his authority. Tea can be used to transform the individual in a religious or social context and to conform and reconfirm the status quo. Lu Yu, for example, saw in Tea a ritual of social belonging, for the Confucian gentleman to affirm, by class-specific protocol, his proper place in the universal order. In this sense, the Heian period nobles under emperor Saga (786-842) in particular imbibed Tea to confirm and reconfirm their allegiance to the then fashionable trends of Chinese culture. Hence the numerous Chinese poems Japanese nobles composed on the subject of Tea at the start of the ninth century.

Particularly between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Tea functioned as a highly charged socio-political ritual. The question of why a period as disruptive as the Warring States period (1467-1572), certainly one of the most destructive in Japanese history, was able to produce such a refined culture as Tea continues to puzzle scholars. If one looks at Tea's function as a socio-political ritual during this time, however, it no longer surprises us to realize that, to ritually overcome the turmoil, Tea *had* to become such a highly refined ritual art. By placing itself at the opposite spectrum of war and to balance out the destruction, Tea of this period was meant to be a kind of ritual anti-structure. By creating such a structure, Tea helped create a balance, mediating ritually and

symbolically between the extremes of war and art, chaos and cosmos. In this way, it helped to maintain some sanity in an otherwise sick age.

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Let us now look at some concrete examples of the transformatory use of Tea in sixteenth-century Japan when warlords such as Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi reunified the nation. In 1568, the *daimyo* Oda Nobunaga obtained from Ashikaga no Yoshiaki (1537-1597) permission to expel from central Japan the Miyoshi clan and to free the cities of Kyoto, Nara, and Sakai. Nobunaga then installed Yoshiaki as fifteenth (and last Ashikaga) shogun but, in fact, placed these cities and their surrounding regions under his control. He levied a military "Arrow" tax on these cities, two thousand *monme* from Sakai alone. Sakai, which continued to support the Miyoshi clan, refused. Nobunaga threatened to attack Sakai. The Egoshu, a kind of guild association of Sakai merchants, split into two factions, one supporting Nobunaga, the other (*e.g.*, Notoya and Beniya, "ya" meaning "shop") opposing him. The opposing faction financed both the defense of the city as well as a Miyoshi comeback. But the opponents underestimated Nobunaga's power. The other faction, including the teamen Imai Sokyu (Naya, 1520-1593) and Tsuda Sogyu (Tennojiya, ?-1591) tried to compromise with Nobunaga and invited "one hundred" of Nobunaga's generals to tea parties in Sakai. One can imagine how difficult and tiring it must have been for Tsuda Sogyu to entertain at his home that many people in one day. They managed to offer Nobunaga the famous and precious "Matsushima" tea jar and a tea caddy, which both had once belonged to Jo'o. This was in 1568/10/2. This gift indicates the use of Tea utensils not only as objects of exceptional value, but also as instruments of peace. Nobunaga was about to go on a hunt for famous Tea utensils (*meibutsu-gari*). When the Hongan-ji temple submitted to Nobunaga, they handed over to him a number of precious utensils including Chinese paintings. Handing over precious Tea utensils to Nobunaga was a kind of surrender ritual, a custom Hideyoshi continued in the next generation of military leaders. One *daimyo*, Matsunaga Hisahide (1510-1577), refused to give his famous Tea kettle to Nobunaga saying that he would rather take it with him to hell. When, under attack by Nobunaga, he decided to kill himself, he threw the kettle against the wall and set his castle afire. This happened in 1577/10/10. The kettle had become too much a part of himself and parting with it was too painful.

Beyond its meaning as a surrender ritual, hunting for the famous utensils was also a means to redistribute them to important allies. As "personal" gifts, Nobunaga gave Jo'o's tea caddy back to Sakai merchant Tsuda Sogyu who, after

Nobunaga's death, handed it over to Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi again returned it to Sogyu whose descendants eventually gave it to third Tokugawa shogun Iemitsu (1604-1651). In reward for military service, Nobunaga gave Hideyoshi a painting by Mu-ch'i and again in 1576/4/7 the kettle "Otogose" with a turned-in mouth, also referred to as *ubaguchi* (hag's mouth). Returning a "hunted" utensil was thus an important token of political alliance and this was only possible because utensils were ritual implements and, as such, ontological extensions or representations of their owners. They were important ritual signifiers and, as such, yielded considerable political and economic value.

Hideyoshi inherited from Nobunaga a passion to hunt for famous *meibutsu* utensils. In 1581/12/22, he received twelve pieces from Nobunaga's collection and, five days later, eight additional pieces. When, in 1583/6/20 Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunal government) gave him the Tea container "First Flower" (Hatsuhana), this was no doubt a political gesture to soothe and gain time. Hideyoshi used this in his tea party of 7/2 to celebrate the inauguration of his Osaka castle. In 9/16, he held his first party to display all the precious utensils he was able to assemble by that time. In 10/11 he received the tea container "Kyogoku Nasu" that had once belonged to the extravagant warrior Sasaki Doyo (1295-1373). Sokyu gave him another Jo'o had once used. Whenever such utensils fell into Hideyoshi's hands, a tea party, that is, a public or at least a semi-public display was called for. Imitating the Ashikaga shogun's public display of horses (*Uma-zoroe*), Hideyoshi organized a famous utensil display (*Dogu-zoroe*) at Osaka castle in 1583(?)/9/16, inviting six guests including Sogyu and Soeki. This *soroe* served as a pretext to force others to give up theirs and present them to Hideyoshi.

In 1583/interc.1/5, Hideyoshi invited Sokyu, Sogyu, Soeki, and three other Sakai teamen to the Yamazaki castle and displayed Nobunaga's favorite jar "Pine Flower" and the tea container "Clouds over the Ocean," as well as the "Otogose" and a Korean *ido* bowl. For the first time, he himself prepared and served the Tea. With this party, Hideyoshi meant to proclaim that, even in matters of his Tea masters, he was following strictly in his former master's footsteps.

Hideyoshi use of Tea did not stop at politics and diplomacy, it extended to his Tea masters who, like Tea itself, became political go-betweens. After a compromise had been reached with a former enemy and Hideyoshi returned to Osaka, he ordered a large-scale tea party, inviting the major teamen of his day (1583/10/15) including Rikyu and the poet *daimyo* Hosokawa Yusai (1534-1610). On the nineteenth, Hideyoshi invited Ieyasu's general as main, Soeki and

Sogyu as additional guests. In 2/8 of the following year, Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga (1540-1591) called for a party during which he displayed Yuan Wu's calligraphy, which passed hands from the merchant Beniya Soyo (sixteenth century teaman and merchant) to Hideyoshi and eventually to Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga. It was during this party, or in the preparation thereof, that Hidenaga became one of Rikyu's foremost protectors. In 2/20, Oda Nobunaga's son Nobukatsu (1558-1630) and his youngest brother Nobumasu, the later teaman Urakusai (1547-1621), came to Osaka with peaceful intentions and were lavishly entertained by Hideyoshi in one of the castle's large reception rooms, with the "Kyogoku Nasu," a Korean *ido* bowl. Later that month, Hideyoshi served them himself in the Yamazato. Next day he went to Kyoto, bought the "Hyogo" jar for one thousand five hundred *monme* and presented it to Nobukatsu as a gift. Nobukatsu paid a visit to the *daimyo* who had installed themselves at the foot of the Osaka castle, but refused to drink any tea for fear of being poisoned.

In 3/5, Hideyoshi staged another of his grand tea parties requesting the presence of all teamen and those who possessed famous utensils. In order to make such large-scale parties politically viable and successful, Hideyoshi resorted to making it the law that all Tea people be present. Poor attendance would have sent the wrong political signal to the rest of the nation. Alone from the city of Kyoto, about fifty people attended. Sogyu and Soeki determined the display of Hideyoshi's tea utensils.

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By this time Hideyoshi had brought most of central Japan under his hegemony. The periphery such as the Northeast and Kyushu remained unstable. Much was at stake for Hideyoshi in Kyushu, especially Portuguese trade. In 1585/2/26, having been attacked by the forces of the Satsuma province, Otomo Sorin (Yoshishige, 1530-1587) sought Hideyoshi's help and in 5/2 sent him as a gift the famous "Higo Nasu" (also Nitari Nasu). Prior to committing any troops to the distant island of Kyushu, Hideyoshi tried all he could to reconcile the two opponents diplomatically. In 10/2, Hideyoshi instructed his Tea master Rikyu and Hosokawa Yusai to draft a letter addressed to Ijuin Tadamune (?-1599), the chief retainer of the Satsuma clan.

We are writing you a few lines on what we have heard about the *kanpaku*'s secret intentions in connection with the clashes between your province and that of Bungo [Otomo Sorin's province].

In recent years he has pacified revolts in the capital and provinces, and most of the country has adhered to peace. On this account even the imperial court respects him. Accordingly he was appointed *naidaijin* and entrusted with this office. Therefore he has been firmly instructed, according to the terms of the imperial wishes, to issue commands to the north, south, east and west.

As regards Kyushu, we have heard that mutual enmity has not ceased and that there have recently been disputes. First of all they [the parties concerned] should abandon everything and follow the imperial order so that a state of peace and friendship may prevail. He [Hideyoshi] has been good enough to inform all the parties concerned in writing that at such a time the borders of the provinces will be judged according to the merits of each case. If they do not comply, he secretly intends to have them dealt with. Needless to say, would it not be advisable for them to use their better judgment this time? As the *taishu* [Shimazu Yoshihisa] has been ordered to come to the capital in recent years, we are notifying you secretly by letter first. When we receive your answer, we will inform you further.(11)

The relationship between Rikyu and Hosokawa Yusai with Ijuin is not just diplomatic, as this letter may suggest. Ijuin was in fact Rikyu's disciple in matters of Tea and received instruction in poetry from the *daimyo* Hosokawa Yusai. These artistic relationships are being exploited for diplomatic use. Such was the advantage of having prestigious artists as political go-betweens. This letter also reveals the importance of such go-betweens as apparently neutral parties mediating, in this case, between Hideyoshi and Satsuma province without any overt partiality, simply conveying "Hideyoshi's secret intentions" in Satsuma's and not necessarily Hideyoshi's interest. Rikyu provided a kind of second, unofficial but highly reliable channel of communication beyond the "stern facades" the warriors often had to adopt to maintain respectability.

By this time, it became sufficiently clear to the imperial court in Kyoto that, among all other *daimyo*, Hideyoshi had the greatest potential for the national unification in which it had a stake. In 3/10, therefore, the emperor Ogimachi bestowed on Hideyoshi the imperial title of Minister of the Interior (Naidaijin) and, after Konoe Sakihisa (1536-1612) made him his adopted son, the court bestowed on him the highest title under the emperor, Kanpaku (Chief Minister of State). This title helped Hideyoshi, who was an upstart of peasant origins, to legitimize his power and overcome his sense of social inferiority. In recognition, Hideyoshi ordered Rikyu to prepare an offertory Tea at the imperial palace, something that had never occurred before. After some preliminary preparations, Hideyoshi decided to invite emperor Ogimachi and six additional nobles to Tea

in 1585/9/7, in a portion of the imperial palace called Kogosho (lit. Small Palace) to the north of the Shishinden palace. With a Tea devotee like Hideyoshi having been given high court rank, the imperial and other noble families developed an interest in Tea which hitherto had not figured as part of traditional court culture.

In 10/7, Hideyoshi invited the emperor to Tea once more but, this time, in a golden teahut he had Rikyu design and install in the imperial palace. Hideyoshi prepared the tea and served it to the emperor. Afterwards, the teahut was dismantled and transported to Osaka castle to be reconstructed. When, in 1586/4, Otomo Sorin came to Osaka castle to thank Hideyoshi for his intervention vis-à-vis Satsuma, Hideyoshi first received Sorin at the large reception room, then took him to the golden tearoom. Sorin also inspected the famous utensils Hideyoshi had displayed for him.

After Hideyoshi had subjugated Kyushu, he moved into his now finished Kyoto castle, the Jurakutei, and, soon after, announced his famous Kitano Grand Tea Party. It was announced for 1587/10/1-10. By that time, the Kitano shrine, dedicated to the statesman and poet Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), had become a center of poetry and Noh. Hideyoshi's invitation of all Tea practitioners, including poor *wabi* people, is a clear indication of the need for universal participation in ritual. He warned all teamen that, should they fail to attend, they would no longer be permitted to practice Tea. This was to show off his taste and possessions, as well as the respect he enjoyed among the nation's Tea people. By attending his tea party, Hideyoshi forced all teamen to acknowledge his absolute authority in the Tea ritual. He intended this show to make it clear that he was the only ritual authority, the prime ritual manipulator in the land. He invited the rich and poor, even those who could not afford Tea. Here is how his public announcement read:

1. Beginning in 10/1 and, depending on the weather, lasting until 10/10, Lord [Hideyoshi] will hold a large Tea in the forest of Kitano [shrine] and display all his famous utensils in order to show them to the *suki* experts and amateurs.

2. All Tea practitioners, regardless of whether they are warrior attendants, townsmen or peasants, or people of lower status should bring a kettle, a *tsurube*, and a bowl, and even if they have no tea, they should all come even though they may only serve *kogashi* (powdered roast rice and parched salt).

3. As for the *zasshiki*, as long as they are in the forest, two-mat arrangements are appropriate. However, *wabi* people may simply spread out straw mats or rice-hull bags [to accommodate their guests] where they please.

4. Not only Japanese, but Chinese and Koreans with an interest in Tea must participate.

5. So that even those who come from far away can see it, the Lord will keep his collection on display until the tenth.

6. All *wabi* people who, despite this order, refuse to participate, will no longer be allowed to serve Tea, let alone *kogashi*. The same applies to their disciples.

7. Lord Hideyoshi will serve Tea to all *wabi* people, regardless from how far they came.(12)

A number of nobles including Yoshida Kanemi (1535-1610) built teahuts, despite the cost. Kanemi had to purchase a Rikyu-style kettle at the cost of one hundred rolls of cloth. One can only imagine the cost involved in building the huts. Some eight hundred structures had been built within a few days. From Nara alone, thirty-six teamen including temple and shrine priests and merchants came. Matsuya Hisamasa (?-1598) brought his "Heron" by Hsu Hsi. One Nara man, however, came too late and, shut out from the lottery, committed suicide. Rikyu ordered the Sakai teamen to come too and assigned them to a particular area in the grove. Hideyoshi displayed his golden tearoom and many of his most famous utensils, including his "Temple Bell in the Evening" painted by Yu Ch'ien. Others also brought their famous utensils. Sokyu displayed his famous "Autumn Moon" by Mu Ch'i. One can only imagine how busy Sogyu and Rikyu were preparing the event. At the start of the party, a lottery determined who would be able to drink Hideyoshi's, Rikyu's, Sokyu's, or Sogyu's Tea. Nobles such as Yoshida Kanemi, Karasuma Mitsunobu (1549-1611) and others drew no. 4 and were therefore served by Imai Sokyu. Nara people such as Matsuya Hisamasa was luckier--he drew the Hideyoshi lot. Hideyoshi is said to have served two hundred and three guests, including Ieyasu and Hidenaga, before he quit at noon. In the afternoon Rikyu guided him around the premises showing him some of the most spectacular arrangements. An unprecedented number of famous utensils, all Hideyoshi was able to hunt up so far, were displayed. One of the attractions was an extreme *wabi* teaman named Hechikan (dates unknown) who installed a red umbrella projecting an approximately two-mat shadow on the ground where his guest sat and drank his Tea. Another, Ikka (dates unknown), hung straw mats from pine trees and,

by spreading sand on the ground and tiles around a hearth, fashioned a natural, out-door tea parlor.

After only one day, Hideyoshi called off the party. His pretext was an uprising in Kyushu, but the real reason was probably that it was too much, even for Hideyoshi, to serve so many. By noon that day, 803 people had already entered the grounds and received tea from Hideyoshi and others. Hideyoshi intended the party to be a kind of democratic gesture uniting under his ritual authority all those who were practicing Tea.

Although we do not know the exact reasons why Hideyoshi forced Rikyu into suicide soon after this event, it is possible that it was a conflict over the use of Tea as a mirror of the new social order that he tried to establish after he managed to unify the nation under his hegemony. After Rikyu's death in 1591, the *daimyo* Furuta Oribe (1544-1615) took over as Hideyoshi's Tea master. He immediately changed Tea procedures to reconfirm Hideyoshi's social hierarchy. With Rikyu's death, Tea changed from an egalitarian, tranformatory ritual to a "confirmatory" one. Rikyu was a product of the Warring States period whereas Oribe and his successors were products of national unity. As ritual, Tea had to adapt itself to these changes. Perhaps Rikyu failed to realize quickly enough that his period had come to an end and died tragically as a consequence.

What are, from what we have learned above, some of the deeper implications of the Tea ritual for Generative Anthropology? There is enough evidence in the history of Tea to confirm GA's theory of the ritual center and the need for political leaders to occupy it, to manipulate it. Ancient Japanese politics can be understood as competition for the control of the ritual center. He who is able to do so, like Hideyoshi, controls the emperor as well as the rest of the population. Of course, by that time in Japanese history, Tea was not the only center; there were many more. But it was an important one in the sense that it brought in the emperor, the aristocrats, warriors, and merchants, that is, the most prominent social classes. All the leading figures, including the emperor, his most important nobles, and the leading warriors, were willing to participate in Tea and thereby to let themselves be ritually manipulated. Tea was therefore the most important socio-political ritual in sixteenth century Japan.

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As a ritual of peace, Tea served to restrict violent behavior and to leave a door open for political consensus and social ordering. Tea created a ritual locus for the conquest of crisis. Without Tea, the destruction of the Warring States period might have been much worse.

Interestingly, Tea is a ritual involving food and drink. As such, it reminds one of the ritual banquets of many peoples and tribes. However remotely, it also reminds us of sacrificial ritual, the tea having replaced over time the sacrificial victims, whether humans or animals, in compliance with the Confucian tenet to let esthetic behavior substitute for violent behavior in ritual. Having replaced the sacrificial blood on which ancient communites renewed themselves, it seems as if Tea was a substitute for ancient blood ritual. What has not changed is the communal revitalization as well as the centrality of this ritual and its socio-political ramifications.

In more than a single aspect, Tea contains striking similarities with the Catholic Mass. Whereas the wine represents the blood of Christ, the tea is at once the center of the universe and a means to harmonize with the essence of things. Tea is a communal event in which all, high and low, daimyo and merchants were able to participate. This is like the Holy Communion in the Mass which kings shared with the commoners. Unlike the Mass, however, Tea is not based on a particular historical remembrance, such as Christ's Last Supper, and does not re-present a given event in the past. The two rituals are similar, however, in the way they create *communitas* through direct participation.

Moreover, Tea confirms GA's understanding of history as anthropology. As we have seen, events in sixteenth-century Japan reveal the fact that history evolves and revolves around the ritual center and its implements, the occupation and possession of which are an essential objective of rule.

Notes

1. "Un ethnographe oublié du XVIIe siècle: J. N. Demeunier," *Revue des Idées* 7, pp. 18-28.

2. *Forest of Symbols*, 1967, p. 43.

3. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973, p. 108ff.

4. *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology*, Stanford UP, 1993, pp. 119-24.

5. *Violence and the Sacred*, 1977.

6. *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos*, 1983, pp. 5-6.

7. *The Ritual Process*, 1969, pp. 94-130.

8. *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 117.

9. The "engenders" theory stems from Dong Zhongshu (176-104 BCE) in his book *Chunggiu Fanlu* and the "overcomes" theory, from Zuio Qiuming, a contemporary of Confucius, who wrote the book *Chunggiu Zuozhuan*.

10. "Ritual," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12 (1987), pp. 405-422, particularly p. 414.

11. Trans. by Beatrice M. Bodard, "Tea and Council--The Political Role of Sen Rikyu," *Monumenta Nipponica* XXXII, 1, pp. 53-54. See also Luise Allison Cort, "The Grand Kitano Tea Meeting," *Chanoyu Quarterly*, no. 31, pp. 15-44.

12. Reprinted in Haga Koshiro, *Sen Rikyu*, 1963, pp. 209-10.